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ABSTRACT

In light of the importance of a teacher's managerial ability and the use of small and large group instruction to increase direct instruction time, teachers should apply specific managerial skills in their reading classes to ensure student learning. Successful teachers get to know their students, set instructional goals, and make sure students know what is expected of them. Preparing reading materials in advance and distributing them before class begins will minimize disruptions. The use of individual student activity folders will also minimize disruptive transitions and can aid in keeping students on task. Students should be taught to use a help sign when they have a problem with seat work, which can cut down on the amount of time wasted when a problem arises and reduce student interruption of a lesson when the teacher is busy elsewhere in the room. By positioning students so that they can be seen by the teacher at all times from anywhere in the room, teachers can more easily monitor student engagement in learning activities. Task-related comments, which specify what the students should be doing at the moment, serve to refocus students' attention to the assigned task without embarrassing them. The best way to minimize disruptive behavior is to note when a student misbehaves, whether there is a pattern to the behavior, and how much it affects other students. Such reflections can help teachers understand the problem and take steps to correct it. (HTH)

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Effective Classroom Management in Reading Instruction

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Effective Classroom Management in Reading Instruction

Maintaining students' attention to learning and keeping them actively engaged in reading materials are being consistently identified as essential elements that foster students' reading achievement. In summarizing studies on teacher effectiveness, Berliner (1981) concluded that "elementary school teachers who find ways to put students into contact with the academic curriculum, and keep them in contact with that curriculum, while maintaining an convivial classroom atmosphere, are successful in promoting reading achievement." This statement highlights a teacher's managerial as well as instructional techniques.

Knowing about the reading process and the techniques and strategies to teach reading are certainly prerequisites of effective reading instruction. However, knowledge of effective managerial techniques is equally

important for ensuring a high percentage of student time on task. Studies have shown clearly that teachers of high-achieving students are good classroom managers (Rosenshine and Berliner, 1978). Instructional techniques and managerial techniques go hand in hand in promoting student learning.

In light of the importance of a teacher's managerial ability and of the use of small and large group instruction to increase direct instruction time, teachers should apply specific managerial skills in their reading class to ensure student learning. Aside from common-sense recommendations passed down through the years, the research literature on classroom management has just begun to reveal specific recommendations. Weber and Weber (1977) defined classroom management as "that set of activities by which the teacher promotes appropriate student behavior and eliminates inappropriate student behavior, develops good interpersonal relationships and a positive socioemotional climate in the classroom, and establishes and maintains an effective and productive classroom organization" (p. 285).

The most meaningful work in this area has been completed by Kounin (1970), Brophy and Putnam (1978), and Emmer, Everston, and Anderson (1980). Many of the characteristics of a good classroom manager deals with preparation. Successful teachers devote the necessary time and energy at the beginning of the school year getting to know their students, setting instructional goals, and making sure students know what is expected of them. Also in the earlier part of the year,

successful teachers plan their lessons in advance, break down their lessons into small, concise parts for presentation to students, and use large group activities to facilitate monitoring of student progress (Emmer, Everston, and Anderson, 1980). The following strategies are supported by many recent research findings and can be used to maximize students' engagement in reading and address individual student needs as well.

Transitions and classroom behavior

To minimize disruptions teachers can make sure that reading materials are prepared in advance and organized and distributed before the reading class begins. Also, to ensure smooth transitioning from one activity to another, teachers should have already explained to their students how the classroom will run and what the daily schedule will be.

Important features in helping students to better understand what behaviors are appropriate in the classroom are demonstration and practice. The teacher demonstrates appropriate behaviors and then supervises students' practice of behaviors. For example, teachers can show students how to move from their seats to the reading group by demonstrating for them how they are to carry their chairs, what path students in different areas of the room are to take, and how students are to arrange their chairs. After a few demonstrations of such behaviors, reading groups can then practice with teacher supervision.

Activity file folder

Using individual student activity folders during the reading lesson can minimize disruptive transitions and can aid in keeping students on-task. These file folders may contain work to be completed by students on a daily basis and provide for individualization of seat work. The teacher should collect, evaluate, and return the folders to the students daily. The benefits of this procedure are many; it promotes close monitoring of student work, provides daily feedback to the student, and eliminates time wasted on the distribution and collection of daily work.

Help signs

Help signs are small signs that students may display on their desks to signal for teacher assistance (Berliner, 1978). Students should be taught to use the sign when they have a problem with seatwork. The use of such a device cuts down on the amount of time wasted when a problem arises as well as on student interruption of a lesson when the teacher is busy elsewhere in the room.

To use help signs effectively it is important to teach students to display their help signs and signal for assistance only when they have a genuine academic problem that they are unable to solve independently. Students are taught that after signalling for teacher assistance, they are to continue with the activity until the teacher can respond to the help sign. If the reading seatwork activity is such that students are unable to continue on with subsequent items, they can select an alternate seatwork activity from their activity file folder

until the teacher arrives to offer help. Thus, students continue to be engaged in meaningful reading activities without remaining off-task waiting until the teacher can offer assistance.

Because students in grades three through six are often able to work for longer time periods in independent activities, help signs may be more effectively used at these levels. However, use of help signs in the primary grade levels is possible if students are shown how to use help signs and practice using them with teacher guidance.

Positioning of students in the classroom

Organizational features of the classroom can be detrimental to students' engagement in reading instruction. Off-task behaviors may be associated with the classroom environment. Conducting small group instruction in areas where the behaviors of all students cannot be monitored and using seating arrangements where all students cannot be seen from any position in the room are examples that can result in decreased student engagement.

By making sure all students are positioned so that they can be seen by the teacher at all times, teachers can more easily monitor student engagement in learning activities. When this common-sense factor is overlooked, it often leads to decreased student time on task and frequent interruptions by both teachers and students.

Task-related comments

Task-related comments are for the purpose of refocusing a students'

attention on an instructional task. Such comments specify what the students are to be doing at the moment and serve to refocus students' attention to the assigned task. An example of a task-related comment is, "Mary, we are completing number six on page 72 in your reading workbook." Task-related comments redirect students' attention to the reading activity without unduly embarrassing them.

Behavior-monitoring techniques

One way to help minimize disruptive behavior is to gather helpful information on disruptive students. Such information can be gathered by asking yourself questions such as the following: When does a student usually exhibit disruptive behavior? Is there a pattern to such occurrences? To what extent does an interruption cause other students to become off-task? These reflections can help teachers understand the problem and take steps to correct it.

Summary

Attention to learning and active engagement in meaningful reading tasks are important features for students' learning to read. Students who fail to attend to teacher instruction or to information presented during reading instruction cannot be expected to learn what is presented. The authors recommend that classroom reading teachers attempt to minimize disruptive transitions during reading instruction and incorporate the use of activity file folders, help signs, behavior-monitoring techniques and teacher task-related comments to enhance on-task reading behaviors.

These suggested procedures provide classroom reading teachers with valuable instructional strategies and classroom practices that will maximize students' engagement in reading and also attend to individual reading needs.

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